

SECOND OPINION COVERAGE ACT

HON. SUSAN A. DAVIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 18, 2003

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, today, I am introducing the Second Opinion Coverage Act of 2003—legislation that will ensure the accessibility and coverage of medical second opinions.

Imagine that your doctor tells you that you must undergo radical surgery that may threaten the use of a limb or leave you with a serious chronic condition. Understandably, you would request a second opinion from another physician. Most health care groups see the value in such requests and provide patients with a second opinion. Besides giving patients much needed peace of mind, second opinions can benefit health plans by reducing the number of invasive procedures and result in better patient care through increased dialogue about treatment options.

However, when I was a member of the California State Assembly, I heard from a number of patients who experienced a glitch in their health care coverage. They noticed the absence of a clear process for obtaining medical second opinions. These patients, many struggling with challenging health conditions, had difficulties obtaining second opinions through their health plans.

After meeting with patients, physicians and health groups, I authored a law in California that guarantees coverage of second opinions. Patients, meeting any one of several qualifying conditions, are entitled to a timely second opinion by a "qualified health care professional," within 72 hours in cases of serious or imminent health threat. When another expert is not available within the provider group or network, the organization will pay for an appropriately qualified doctor outside of the plan. Patients are responsible for the costs of applicable co-payments.

The law in California was a good first step. Unfortunately, this legislation does not cover the almost 5 million Californians enrolled in self-insured, federally regulated health plans. Nationwide, this translates into 67 million persons without guaranteed access to second opinions. This means that one in four insured families are not protected by California's own second opinion law! I believe the time has come to make access to second opinions a national standard.

I urge you, Mr. Speaker, and all of my colleagues to pass this critical legislation quickly into law.

TRIBUTE TO RUTH STEELE

HON. SCOTT MCINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 18, 2003

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize Ruth Steele of Pueblo, Colorado for her determination and commitment to her community. Ruth is the director of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Commission and Cultural Center, and has been a tireless activist for African-American interests in Pueblo and throughout Colorado. I

am honored to recognize her accomplishments before this body of Congress and this nation.

Ruth graduated from Centennial High School in Pueblo and attended the University of Colorado at Boulder. In the 1950s and 60s she was active in the civil rights movement, registering African-Americans to vote. Since then, she has been a leader for Pueblo's African-American community. She was a legislative aide to state Representatives Wilma Webb and Arie Taylor, and worked to establish a Martin Luther King holiday in Colorado.

Ruth helped found Pueblo's orphanage for African-American children, the renovated Lincoln Home, and the Martin Luther King Cultural Center which she now directs. In the future, Ruth hopes to build a multicultural center next to the Lincoln Home and expand African-American leadership in Pueblo. She has been a strong advocate of quality education for African-American youth and was recently named the Greater Pueblo Chamber of Commerce Citizen of the Year for her service.

Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege to recognize Ruth Steele before this body of Congress and this nation for her outstanding commitment to the community she calls home. Ruth has worked tirelessly to build bridges between Pueblo's disparate communities. Her leadership is an invaluable asset to her neighbors and fellow citizens.

INTRODUCTION OF CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO PROTECT THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND THE NATIONAL MOTTO

HON. CHARLES W. "CHIP" PICKERING

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 18, 2003

Mr. PICKERING. Mr. Speaker, I come before the House today to introduce legislation creating a Constitutional Amendment to protect the Pledge of Allegiance and the National Motto.

Last month, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals let stand the ruling of a San Francisco Federal Court which proclaimed the Pledge of Allegiance unconstitutional. There have been reports that the next victim of the left's crusade against the historic heritage of our nation could be to challenge the use of our National Motto, "In God We Trust," on our currency.

These are unfortunate assaults on America's tradition of recognizing the role of God in our country's life, and as the foundation of our liberties. Unfortunately, there has been a trend in our courts that has sought to remove every vestige of God from our country, while child pornography is protected.

When our Founding Fathers sought the monumental break between the American people and the British King, they wrote in the Declaration of Independence that they appealed "to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions." They appealed to God to judge their moral condition, their uprightness and righteousness in forming our nation. Today, we can forget making any such appeal, for our judges have declared that the mere acknowledgement of God violates our highest national law. My colleagues, those who led our country in years past would be

outraged. Those who gave their lives for our independence would be outraged. Those who gave their lives that we might realize the most American dream, that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights," those leaders too would be outraged. Americans who gave their lives to secure our freedoms would be outraged. Americans, who this very day face a war to secure our freedoms and liberate Iraq, are outraged. And friends, I am outraged, too.

The time for action has come. Today, I am introducing legislation that would provide for a Constitutional Amendment to protect the Pledge of Allegiance and the National Motto, "In God We Trust."

Amending the Constitution is never taken lightly, nor should it be. Yet Congress can no longer sit idly while the courts rewrite our nation's history and traditions. This amendment is very clean, clear, concise, and unobtrusive as possible. However, it is very effective and the only way to ensure that the Pledge of Allegiance and the National Motto are protected and preserved.

I urge my colleagues to cosponsor this bill and hope that we can begin the process to move it forward.

WE THE PEOPLE PROGRAM

HON. LEONARD L. BOSWELL

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 18, 2003

Mr. BOSWELL. Mr. Speaker, on April 26, 2003, more than 1200 students from across the United States will visit Washington, D.C. to compete in the national finals of the We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution program, an educational program developed specifically to educate young people about the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Administered by the Center for Civic Education, the We the People program is funded by the U.S. Department of Education by act of Congress.

I am proud to announce that the class from Central Academy from Des Moines will represent the State of Iowa in this national event. These young scholars have worked conscientiously to reach the national finals by participating at local and statewide competitions. As a result of their experience they have gained a deep knowledge and understanding of the fundamental principles and values of our constitutional democracy.

The three-day We the People national competition is modeled after hearings in the United States Congress. The hearings consist of oral presentations by high school students before a panel of adult judges on constitutional topics. The students are given an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge while they evaluate, take, and defend positions on relevant historical and contemporary issues. Their testimony is followed by a period of questioning by the judges who probe the students' depth of understanding and ability to apply their constitutional knowledge.

The We the People program provides curricular materials at upper elementary, middle, and high school levels. The curriculum not only enhances students' understanding of the institutions of American constitutional democracy, it also helps them identify the contemporary relevance of the Constitution and Bill of